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**Alas! what Brought Thee Hither?: The Chinese in New York, 1800-1950**

By Arthur Bonner

"500 Pearl Street"

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21 THE 1863 RIOTS TO PROTEST THE CIVIL WAR DRAFT BECAME ATTACKS ON BLACKS. THE BURNING OF THE COLORED ORPHAN ASYLUM ON FIFTH AVENUE LIVED LONG IN THE CITY'S MEMORY.

sibly three, joined the battle. John Akkomb, who in 1856 welcomed a reporter to his Pearl Street boarding house with a polite "How do, Mosheer," was a steward on the gunboat *Massachusetts* in river engagements in Texas and Louisiana. He was twice wounded, once severely in the chest. He returned to the city and lived with his wife, Kitty, and three children on Cherry Street.<sup>7</sup>

Hong Kee Kang, a former sailor who lived on Cherry Street, enlisted in the Navy in July 1863 and served as a steward on the gunboat *Albatross*, handing out powder for the guns when Admiral Farragut blockaded Mobile. He received an honorable discharge in September 1864 and settled down in New York. He operated a grocery store on Staten Island and, for many years, owned a cigar business at 500 Pearl Street under the name of William A. Hong.<sup>8</sup>

The third recruit may have been John Ah Woh. At an 1878 meeting of Chinese claiming American citizenship, Ah Woh—a cigar maker living on Baxter Street—showed a document dated 1863. Since immigrants were readily granted citizenship as an inducement to enlist, he may have volunteered for service then.<sup>9</sup>

In the early years, the racism faced by the Chinese in New York was a mild reflection of the greater antipathy toward black slaves. In July 1863, New York was swept by five days of rioting touched off by what were seen as unfair laws regulating the drafting of men for the army. At least 105 people were killed and tens of thou-

22 OTHER RIOTERS LYNCHED A BLACK.

sands of dollars worth of property was destroyed. The mobs lynched a black man, burned the Colored Orphan Asylum, and threatened or attacked brothels and homes of racially mixed couples. When someone persuaded a mob that the Chinese were but a "modification" of blacks, the Chinese in the Fourth Ward were also attacked:

Someone disputed this theory, and quite a family quarrel occurred at once. Several blows were struck, the anti-Chinaman in the end getting the worst of it. Afterwards there

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was a general attack upon all "American citizens of Chinese origin" and John in a state of terror has thrown himself upon the police for his protection. The representatives of this race in New York are a peculiar people. They seem to have a thorough dislike of white men but a very great regard for white women. Most of them are married to females who are only for a husband not particular about his nativity or appearance. The wives "wear the breeches" and John is as obedient